

THE
DUTY of fearing God,
AND THE
KING:



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DUTY of fearing GOD,
AND THE
KING:
AND THE
DANGER of Meddling with
them that are given to Change.
Set forth in A
SERMON

PREACHED at the PARISH-CHURCH of
WHIPPINGHAM;

On *Thursday* the Ninth Day of *October*,
Being the Day appointed for a General
Thanksgiving to ALMIGHTY GOD, for the Suppression
of the late UNNATURAL REBELLION.

By JOHN GILBERT, Rector of *Whippingham*, in
the ISLE OF WIGHT.

S A R U M:

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T H E

Duty of fearing God,

A N D T H E

K I N G :

A N D T H E

DANGER of falling with
them that to God



S E R M O N

Preached at the Parish-Church of

W H I P P I N G H A M,

On Friday the 15th Day of October,

1704. The Day appointed for a General
Fasting to humbly beseech God for the supplication
of his Church, and the Kingdom of Great Britain.

By JOHN GILBERT, Rector of Whippingham.

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T H E
Duty of fearing G O D,
A N D T H E
K I N G:

Proverbs 24th Chap.  xxi. and xxii.

*My Son fear thou the Lord, and the King :
And meddle not with them that are given to
change ; for their Calamity shall rise suddenly,
and who knoweth the ruin of them both ?*

IN these words the wiseman has delivered unto us something by way of advice and instruction, and something by way of caution.

The instructive advice consists of two parts, one is, to fear God, (which in the sense of the wiseman comprehends the keeping his commandments and obeying his Laws,) the other is, to fear also the

King, and be obedient to such as are in authority; for as the word *fear* is used in both cases, we must suppose it to comprehend obedience in the latter, as well as in the former. And as the wiseman has joined these *two* together as *one*, it seems to be for this reason, *viz.* to intimate to us that the *one* is a branch of the *other*, obedience to magistrates a part or branch of our obedience to God; so that we should understand ourselves obliged, as to obey God, so to be good subjects; or as the Apostle expresses it, *to submit our selves to every ordinance of Man for the Lord's sake.*

The second thing remarkable in the words is the *Caution* that is given us against *meddling with those that are given to change.* For which there is a reason suggested in the caution it self, which, being annexed to the foregoing advice, intimates to us that those, who are given to change, are ill-men, disobedient to government, and despisers of dominion, from whom we should be in danger of being infected with ill-principles, and growing seditious and turbulent as they, by meddling or having to do with them; for

Evil

Evil Communications corrupt good Manners: for which the wiseman has also added some further reasons proper to provoke and increase our caution, viz. The destruction which such seditious men generally bring upon themselves, or which God in his providence and judgement will bring upon them for their iniquity, *Their Calamity shall rise suddenly:* And again, the great likelihood of involving all that shall have to do with them in the same calamity, which as in all probability it will be great, so it is indeed unknown how great or how speedy the ruin of them both may be. *Who knoweth the Ruin of them both?* Which last clause may likewise be understood in another sense, as though the wiseman had designed to represent not only the sure destruction that such bring upon themselves, but the confusion and misery they bring upon the world in general, there being no seeing to the end of the troubles that such men cause in the world, especially if they can draw in the unwary, the well-meaning but unthinking part of mankind, to join with them in their turbulent practices.

As

As these are things that are offered to our consideration from the Text, I shall speak, as the time will permit me, to the several particulars, and make my observations thereupon, such as will not be foreign to the subject of this day of thanksgiving.

In the first place therefore, I shall make no doubt but all will acknowledge the first part of the wiseman's advice, *viz.* Our fearing God to be our absolute duty, upon the account of his being the creator of heaven and earth, and the wise governor of the world, and that in these respects all are obliged to obey him, and become the subjects of his kingdom, *whose Dominion extendeth throughout, and shall endure to the End of the World.* Neither is it to be questioned but that all, who are sensible of the obligations that lie upon us to fear God and obey his divine laws, will readily acknowledge, that should it happen for the laws and commands of men to be contrary to those of God, we must in that case *obey God rather than Men*, and in as much as God must be obeyed before men, we may conclude

conclude that no obligation can lie upon the conscience to obey any human authority, whereinfoever we judge or apprehend any contrary obligation to lie from the authority of God. From whence I observe that God's authority obliges us antecedently to all other, that it bindeth beyond all other so as to sit aside all other, if in any respect enjoining any thing contrary to *that*. And that as it binds without any human law, and beyond, or before, and above all such, so for that reason the Interpretation of God's law is not to be resolved into any human authority, but men are to judge of it for themselves, according to an honest and upright conscience, from right reason partly, but chiefly from the revelation that is made of it, and the means that God hath afforded them to know his Will. I observe this against the principal of Mr. *Hobbs*, who has run so far into the extreme in asserting the necessity of an absolute obedience to the civil power, as to say in effect, that the scripture is not law to us until made so by the laws of a kingdom, and that a man is not bound to profess christianity, if the civil power should forbid that Profession.

Positions

Positions that are plainly irreligious, exalting the authority of man above the authority of God. Whereas truth must oblige us to acknowledge that how great soever the authority of man be, the authority of God is greater, as He is *higher than the Highest*, and consequently that the first duty obliging us, and that above and beyond all other, is this, that we *fear God and keep his commandments*.

After this there is indeed another authority that we must be subject to in its place, which is that of *Man*. And for the necessity of this subjection there is sufficient evidence from the light of nature, which hath not only guided all mankind to admit of government, but hath also shewn that the peace and welfare and happiness of mankind depends upon their living in society, as the subsistence of societies upon this, that there be government, and power placed in the hands of such as are to rule, that is to say, not only force to compell, but an authority that may claim of right a due submission from those that are to be governed by it. But it is not only reason that directeth and hath laid us under an obligation to this, but
 God

God also by his law hath bound our conscience; He hath told us in his word that government is his ordinance; and right reason can conclude no other, inasmuch as we see that God hath made man a sociable creature, and hath endued him with inclinations to preserve himself and what belongs unto him, which hath laid him under a necessity of submitting to some power, which shall govern and prevent men's doing injustice to one another: and inasmuch too, as there can remain no doubt with us, but that the just and righteous God would have injuries and wrongs curbed, and that the God of peace would have his creatures live in peace and quietness. The which is a thing impossible without government, and a submission to government, as without the former each man's hand would be against his brother, and without the latter no government could be long supported, if there were right for every man to do what he might at any time find an opportunity to do; strength in such a case would be the only law of justice. But as man is a rational creature, his reason binds him where the light of nature shews a necessity, as it

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does the necessity of submission to government. And when the law of God comes in to back it, as it does in this point, telling us that *the Powers that be are ordained of God*, and that *whosoever* therefore *resisteth the Power, resisteth the Ordinance of God*, and that the *Higher Powers are the Ministers of God to us for good*, intimating the end of God's appointment thereof to be the good of mankind, these things must surely yield a sufficient evidence that we are to be subject not only for *Wrath*, but also for *conscience sake*. Thus far we have seen then the grounds of the wiseman's instructive advice to *fear God and the King*, and the reason of his joining these together.

I shall now proceed to his caution, that we *meddle not with them that are given to change*, that is, with such men as are for making changes and innovations in government without lawful authority, in a violent and turbulent way, against the rules of justice, and without regard to the publick good, upon ill-principles, and for selfish ends.

[II]

I thus enlarge in the description of the persons that I think the wiseman does here intend to warn us against, because it's not a thing impossible for alterations to be made in government for the better, and it's what absolute necessity sometimes obligeth to for the publick safety ; for as no human foresight can provide against all accidents in future time, much less against all that may fall out through the iniquity of men, and therefore as human laws in general must admit of alterations according as circumstances shall oblige, so even those laws, which relate to the settlement of a constitution, may admit of alteration, when reason of necessity requireth it for the good of the publick, notwithstanding that maxim in politicks, *Better an inconvenience than a mischief*, and what is usually concluded from it, that alterations in government are not to be attempted. For though it be true that an inconvenience is rather to be born with, than that the publick good should be put in jeopardy by the remedy sought, and upon that account wise men are for avoiding the hazard that is run in alterations, *Yet* if the

inconvenience be such, as that the publick good cannot be preserved in tolerable sort, and especially if the case should be, as many times it is, that the iniquity of men should have turned those laws upon which the constitution of the government is framed, to become destructive of that publick weal, which they were made to preserve, in such a case the same reason that does require and also justify the alteration of particular laws by authority, to remedy particular evils, that were unforeseen, or that have grown and arisen from the iniquity of men abusing perverting and eluding such laws, the same reason I say and necessity will likewise justify the changing those laws upon which a constitution is founded, when the publick good cannot by other means be preserved in safety, nor the attempts of designing men any other way prevented, inasmuch as though there may be some hazard run in such alteration, yet the risque is less to the publick-weal than to leave it open to their attempts. As reason therefore must allow every government the right of preserving it self, it must be admitted there may be changes made by authority in a regular way for
that

that end, and those that are under authority will for the same reason be obliged both to acquiesce and concur in them. As therefore it's a thing impossible to suppose government should remain always in one state, when not only time and accidents, but practices of designing men very often force an alteration to preserve as well government itself, as the end of government, therefore I conceive the wiseman not to intend absolutely to prescribe that there never should be any alteration or change in a form of government, but that his meaning is to prescribe, not to governors, but to the governed, to particular persons acting for their own ends, that these should not attempt the making changes or alterations without lawful authority, or in an undue manner with hazard to the publick peace, or upon feigned pretences, of amending the state of things, (to determine whereof is not their province,) nor in compliance with their own unquiet humour, or any private passions that may influence them, or any selfish ends of their own that they may have an aim

aim to promote. For as in all such attempts the publick peace is hazarded, authority not duly regarded, private, if not ill designs carried on to the detriment, if not subversion, of the publick-good; therefore all such attempts are always to be looked on as unjust and dishonest, as they are generally mischievous in their consequences, and therefore all that make any such attempts are reputed too, and that justly, as ill, unquiet, turbulent, seditious, self-willed and self-ended men. And this will ever be a reason for all good well-disposed and peaceable men to be cautious at all times how they have to do or meddle with any of those that are thus given to change, for great is the contagion vice, and good men therefore cannot be too careful to keep out of the danger of its infection; great is the frailty of our nature, and good men therefore cannot be too cautious how they expose their virtue to the assaults and temptations of the wicked.

When good men are once embarked with bad, they lie under a double disadvantage, first, as the intentions of the one are open
open

open and manifest, when the designs of the other are close and concealed, upon which account the innocent are always in danger of being deluded by the crafty.

Were wicked men to lay open the whole scheme of their flagitious purposes at once, none to be sure would join with them, but those that were as profligately wicked as themselves; In order therefore to draw in men of better intentions and dispositions, they keep their base designs and pernicious ends as much out of sight as may be, so that whilst good men, joining unhappily with such as these, are not sufficiently aware whither their companions are bent, they are too often and too easily led out of the way; And, when their integrity is thus imposed on, they very frequently fall under another disadvantage, as very often, before the discovery of the ill designs of such as they have joined themselves to, they are deluded by these to do some act or acts that are ill, though probably out of a good intention; and afterwards too late perceiving the snare they had been drawn into, when they come to discover the
foul

foul designs of such as seduce them, then finding withall themselves to have made wrong and unjustifiable steps, from which they cannot recede with safety, they are thereby under the temptation of going forward with a bad conscience. And thus good men, while they act in conjunction, as they think for good ends, with such as are ill men, and of ill designs, are by degrees carried on to those extremes, as had they forseen at first, they would have been altogether ashamed of, and to actions so bad, as their consciences would have startled at the thought of.

Thus have I laid before you, what I think the wiseman may be suppos'd to mean by his caution in the text, *meddle not with them that are given to Change*, which certainly for the reasons already given must be supposed to import only such changes as are attempted without legal authority, by men enemies to peace, and who are seeking private advantages from publick calamities.

I come now to make an application of what hath been said to the occasion of this day's solemnity.

Now

Now certainly there must be a great irreverence of God, as well as disloyalty to the King, in the late horrid attempt to dethrone and murder his Majesty, and subvert our happy constitution in church and state.

I have already observed to you that there may be changes upon reasons of necessity lawfully made, not only in a form of government but even in the person governing, because as the end of government is the good of mankind, so the form of government and the persons governing are only means conducive to that end, and as the end must be always judg'd of more value and superior to the means, so reason infers that the means may be changed, when the end cannot otherwise be preserved, and that for this obvious and plain reason, because princes were made for men, and not men for princes.

Upon this principle is in my opinion,
founded the legality of the great change
G in

in our government at the late glorious revolution.

Our history's are full of the measures taken by the unhappy bigotted prince then upon the throne, to break in upon our legal constitution ; setting aside the laws, or voiding their effect, by a dispensing power arbitrary and at pleasure, invading the religious as well as civil rights ; requiring the clergy to read a declaration against both law and conscience ; erecting an ecclesiastical commission against law, to awe them from preaching against popery, and compel their doing such things as might make way for it ; imprisoning the bishops that petitioned to be eased of that which was against law, as well as against their consciences, and charging them with sedition for it ; publishing a declaration for an universal toleration and liberty of conscience, that under colour thereof an opportunity might be given for a numerous resort of priests and papists to corrupt and poison our land.

These are some among the many steps taken by that prince to enslave a free people.

In these extremitys what could the people do? They remonstrate and petition for redress, but their humble and modest desires are termed insolence and sedition, and they are told that the will of their imperious monarch is the rule of his governing, and their obedience.

Upon this the people apply to a foreign aid to relieve them from these distresses, and to recover the sinking and almost ruined interests of the protestant religion : The aid desired, by the good providence of God, happily and timely arrives on our coasts ; The prince upon the throne, conscious of his manifest and designed male-administration, either dreading the consequences of the arrived succours, or apprehending the parliament, which he had called in his necessity, would question those arbitrary and illegal proceedings, and call his ministers to account for them, thought fit, either of his own mind, or upon advice of his evil counsellors, to withdraw himself from the government and leave the nation in all confusion. In which circumstances the natural

and most reasonable expedient was, that there should be a convention of the estates of the realm; which convention judged the prince's with drawing to be an abdication of the government, being a plain refusal to govern the realm by the laws thereof, and that by this abdication the throne became vacant, which the convention filled. When thus filled, the legislative power was again compleat, and in full force as before, not only to constrain by power, but to bind the conscience of the subject. And this legislature it was, that to preserve our constitution in church and state, made laws in two successive reigns to establish and secure the protestant succession, which through the blessing of providence we have lived to see long since take place, and to be now in the possession of the throne. As therefore this establishment was the act of the legislative power, and the legality of it having been not only acknowledged but sworn to, by the greatest part at least of the subjects of all degrees in the realm, not only before, but since it took place, what can the mutinying or rising up against it now
must

and the casting off a sworn allègiance be, but sedition and rebellion, and that too the more criminal, as the consequences thereof must have been fatal to the church and nation? Nor will the revival of discarded pretensions in any wise justify it, for if things are considered impartially, our legal settlement must be acknowledged to be founded on right, as being the provision made by the proper persons that should judge of what was to be done, when the government was abdicated, and the nation left in confusion.

This happy establishment the justly boasted glory of the *English* nation, and the envy of foreigners, has been since often openly and secretly attacked by it's pretended friends and declared enemies, and God in his just judgments has suffered the destroying sword to come far into our land, and had it not pleased his goodness in the *midst of Judgment to remember Mercy*, it had not failed, but we had become a *Prey unto their Teeth*.

Our enemies at home encouraged and supported by the partizans of *Rome, France*
and

and *Spain*, began promoted and abetted the late unnatural rebellion, which. had it been successful, (as we had at one time the greatest reason to fear and dread it would have been) must unavoidably have ended in the destruction of our religious and civil liberties : Our civil liberties must have been exchanged for slavery, and the purity of christianity, which we of these nations have the happiness and blessing to enjoy and profess, would have been swallowed up in the errors, absurdities, superstition, and idolatry of the *Church of Rome*.

These are the deliverances, for which we are now assembled to give thanks unto our God, yea, and I hope do give thanks ; And as, next and immediate under the providence of an All-gracious God, and the wisdom of his majesty, these deliverances were wrought for us by the conduct and valour of *His Royal Highness the Duke of Cumberland*, He may with justice be stiled not only the *Rescuer* and *Preserver* of *our Civil Rights*, but also, the *Christian Hero* of the present age.

Our

Our diffentions and party divisions, I will not say with design in all, have I fear greatly contributed to this bold and daring attempt of our enemies ; for when men have been told by those, who have of late affected to distinguish themselves more by a pretended love to their country, than by duty and loyalty to their prince, that measures were taking by the administration entirely destructive of the people's interest ; what could this be supposed to terminate in, but that those, who have been deluded by such false suggestions, should grow cool and indifferent who was in possession of the throne, and consequently be either the more ready to concur in a *Change*, or the less zealous to oppose the designs of our enemies ?

It is well known that a late prime minister, now with God, high, and deservedly so, in the esteem of his royal master, was branded with those hateful accusations, and pursued with such clamorous insults, as to be libelled in our publick papers with the
infamous

infamous character of *Grand Corrupter*. In these circumstances what does our good and gracious King, but, in compliance to the groundless and unreasonable jealousies of his people, and to convince the world that He has no private views inconsistent with the good of his subjects, change his ministry, and take to his assistance others of the best capacities and most approved integrity in the nation? and yet (such is the restlessness and virulence of party rage) these men also are now vilified and traduced, as if their very nature and honesty of heart were changed by being employed by their sovereign.

Believe me, my dear countrymen, the interests and happiness of the King and his subjects are by nature inseparably connected and mutually dependent on each other, and therefore let us be no longer deluded by those monsters in politicks, who would occasion such divisions in the state between prince and people, which must unavoidably end in ruin and desolation, like those in nature, who by separating the head from the
the

the body cause a total dissolution of the animal oeconomy.

Let us remember it is our interest as well as duty to be good subjects, and if we have any value for our selves, for our wives, children, and properties, now rescued from impending ruin, let us render the tribute of a grateful heart to Almighty God for these his benefits, and let us testify our gratitude to Him by a dutiful reverence and submission to his majesty, who under the guidance and direction of his all-wise and unerring providence, hath been the happy instrument of our deliverance.

Again, Is our holy religion preserved? Have we yet the blessing of the gospel in in it's purity continued to us ? then let it be our continual study that our *conversation may be such as becometh the Gospel of Christ* : Let us all in our proper stations and spheres be strenuous in opposing that torrent of prophaneness and impiety, and those breaches of common morality which are visible in our streets ; and let our joy upon this our day

day of thanksgiving be such as becometh christians, and not end in an unhallowed transport of riot and debauchery.

In a Word, To these our praises and thanksgivings let us add our most ardent and earnest prayers and supplications to Almighty God the *Great Preserver of Men*, that in mercy to us, and these Kingdoms; He would be pleased to guard and protect the sacred lives of our most gracious Sovereign King *GEORGE*, and his Royal Family from all secret conspiracies and open violence, and that there may never be wanting one of his illustrious House to sway the sceptre of these Kingdoms, and to preserve and secure a free people from all tyranny both spiritual and temporal.

To which let all the people say, *Amen.*

F I N I S.

